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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 GABORONE 001036

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [BC](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S COURTESY CALL WITH BDF COMMANDER

REF: A. STATE 123049

[B](#). STATE 94292

[C](#). GABORONE 875

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen J. Nolan for reasons 1.4 b and d

[1](#). (C) SUMMARY. Ambassador Nolan paid a courtesy call on the Commander of the Botswana Defence Force ("BDF"), LTG Tebogo Masire on November 18. The Commander and Ambassador discussed the Commander's desire for more joint exercises and exchange programs, the military assistance package requested by Botswana, and the current state of the BDF. END SUMMARY

[2](#). (U) Ambassador Nolan paid an introductory call on the Commander of the Botswana Defence Force ("BDF"), Lieutenant General Tebogo Masire on November 18 at BDF Headquarters. Pol/Econ Officer attended as notetaker. Bilateral Affairs Officer (AFRICOM), Major Sydney Shinn also attended the meeting. The Commander was accompanied by a notetaker.

[3](#). (SBU) The Ambassador told Commander Masire that LTC Christian Ramthum, the current Defense Attache in Namibia, had been formally approved as a regionally accredited DATT for Botswana. The Ambassador further explained that Washington told him to expect a permanent DATT to be stationed in Gaborone starting in 2010. The Ambassador also briefed the Commander on upcoming visitors to Botswana, including General William E. Ward, AFRICOM Commander and retired Col. Dan Henk from the Air War College.

Joint Exercises, Exchanges

[4](#). (SBU) Commander Masire said that he hoped the number of exchanges and military exercises between Botswana and the United States would increase. He stated that these types of activities have greatly decreased in the recent past, and stated that he was told this was due to U.S troop requirements in Iraq. The Commander said that previously there had been an annual coordinated exercise with troops from both countries, which always included a unit of Special Forces troops from the United States. Commander Masire hoped very much that joint exercises would resume as soon as troop-staffing commitments allowed. He added that he would at least like there to be an exercise that could be observed by BDF forces.

[5](#). (C) General Masire said that he would be interested in hearing any ideas for these types of programs. The Ambassador introduced Major Sydney Shinn and explained that he was working to plan a joint exercise between the BDF and the North Carolina National Guard through the State Partnership Program. Major Shinn explained that, while the maneuver was in the very early stages of planning, he hoped

it would include military elements and also meet some of the objectives of PEPFAR. (COMMENT The LTG seemed genuinely interested in this proposal, although Major Shinn had met some resistance to this idea from BDF officers lower in the command chain.)

Request for Military Aid

¶6. (S) LTG Masire asked the Ambassador about the current status of the GOB request for U.S. military assistance (ref C). LTG Masire stated that a member of the BDF who recently visited DC came away with the understanding that "everything in the request was cleared." The Ambassador explained that the response to Botswana's request sounded very positive while he was in Washington, but that he had not yet received a formal decision on all the requested items and would need to wait for official word. (NOTE: Post has been requesting a meeting with Minister of Defense Seretse to convey to him the points on security assistance contained in refs A and B. However, the MOD has not yet been able to grant our request. The Embassy's Office of Security Cooperation has however informally notified the BDF about the increase in IMET funding and the restoration of FMF. Post will continue its attempts to formally notify MOD of the U.S. decision in this matter. End Note.)

Current State of Affairs in the BDF

¶7. (C) Commander Masire stated that the current BDF is "very stretched" and he said we "always tell our political masters"

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that more troops are required for the ever increasing spectrum of work the BDF is being asked to perform - wildlife conservation, crime fighting, fire fighting, immigration enforcement, and patrols related to foot and mouth disease. He stated that currently the BDF cannot fulfill its training cycles as well as the additional duties they are performing, and therefore training is suffering. He said that the request for additional troops is usually met with a great resistance and that many members of Parliament find it "unacceptable". However, the Commander plans to present a proposal to increase troop levels to the Cabinet in the middle of next year.

¶8. (U) The Ambassador said that there are important parallels between the North Carolina National Guard and the BDF. He said that both organizations are being called on to have a diverse skill set and that future cooperation between the two organizations could be very useful and we should "explore ways to get the most impact" from the partnership.

¶9. (U) While discussing the BDF Defense Review Process, Commander Masire stated that the process started over a year ago, and is supposed to be finished September/October 2009. However, he thought it likely that the program review process would likely "slip into 2010."

¶10. (SBU) When asked about the current status of the BDF's staff college, the Commander stated that the first class started earlier in 2008 and would be graduating November 20. The Commander said he was very pleased that the staff college is up and running as there had been a large bottleneck in officer training. Historically, he said, the GOB had to send officers to other countries for training and that in a calendar year the GOB was only able to train about 10 officers. The Commander stated that in order to maintain training levels, 40 officers a year should receive training. Commander Masire stated that the BDF staff college curriculum is mainly based on British models, with influence from Indian models. He stated that as this is the pilot year of the program, no foreign officers are enrolled, but beginning in 2010 the program will enroll one officer from each of the SADC countries. He said that staffing for the college is

primarily done by Indian and Nigerian officers, but that in the next class there will also be British instructors. The training is currently being conducted in leased buildings, but will be moving to the Glenn Valley barracks once construction of a facility is completed.

¶11. (U) Commander Masire also discussed the recent graduation of the first class of female officers. The parade for the graduation will be held during the week of 24 November and U.S. Col. Martha McSally will attend and give a motivational speech. He added that this was fitting, as Col. McSally has been very involved with the class. The Commander said that, unlike this class, which was trained in Tanzania, the next class of female officers would be trained in Botswana. He added that all of the women from the first class who did not graduate have been integrated into the second class for additional training.

NOLAN